



Call for Applications - RSA Policy Expo 2019

Austerity Urbanism and Social Inclusion

Austerity urbanism has been a useful concept for looking at how cities and city-regions are subjected, and subject themselves, to neoliberalisation, particularly in the period of intense retrenchment since the 2008 crash. It interrogates several processes: a prolonged and continuing fiscal squeeze on municipalities and public agencies, marketisation of public goods and of governance institutions, the downloading of costs and responsibilities from higher tiers onto localities, increasingly punitive workfare regimes and the intensification of urban and inter-urban inequalities, as austerity squeezes citizens least able to bear the costs. At the same time, local authorities are forced into intensive inter-urban competition for investment and resources, but in a period seemingly of diminishing returns. The concept has greatest purchase in the North Atlantic sphere, in relation to the dismantling and repurposing of Keynesian welfare bureaucracies. However, it also resonates in cities of the global south, where growth and competition doctrines echo those of austere neoliberalism in the north.

Austerity urbanism highlights a multitude of spatialised polarisations and exclusions across domains of class, race, gender and sexuality, within and between cities and urban regions. On the face of it, “social inclusion” is the antithesis. The concept became popular in the heyday of “third way” politics in the UK, Europe and the USA. In critical research, it was associated with the repertoires of “rollout neoliberalism”, where resources were invested in public services and urban and regional development to address mass unemployment arising from industrial retrenchment in the crisis of Fordism. This was to be achieved mainly by investing in individuals and communities expelled from the industrial labour market, equipping them to compete in the neoliberalising and globalising “knowledge economy” and enticing investors. This concept of social inclusion was widely criticized for legitimising neoliberalism, and unsurprisingly fell out of favour with the onset of austerity after the 2008 crisis.

However, with the popularisation of UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Habitat III agenda, and the prominence of cities in global development discourse, the vocabulary of social inclusion, and inclusive cities, is back. At the same time, the age of austerity has unleashed waves of urban insurgency, new urban movements and urban, municipal and metropolitan governing configurations committed to demanding and enacting solidarity in pursuit of substantive egalitarian goals. These developments pose important questions addressed by this expo: what can cities subject to waves of austerity urbanism contribute to defining and delivering a radically inclusionary agenda – “inclusionary urbanism”? In addressing this theme, we welcome proposals exploring the following and other related issues:

- Can cities govern austerity in ways that mitigate exclusion, and actively enhance social inclusion – for example by reducing substantive inequalities?

- Can cities and city-regions overcome spatial and scalar barriers to inclusionary urbanism, particularly in the context of austerity-driven state rescaling programmes?
- What international or comparative evidence is there that the “new municipalist” current is challenging austerity urbanism and delivering inclusionary urbanism?
- Can ideas associated with the resilient city or resilient city-region contribute to inclusionary urbanism?
- Has resistance to austerity led to more inclusionary forms of urban governance, urban solidarity or urban community?

We seek proposals that, while ambitious in advancing the field, target policy-relevant questions and envisage avenues to influence policy and practice. The RSA will award £15,000 for the completion of the research and outputs. The research should produce an article for our gold open access journal, *Regional Studies*, *Regional Science* and a short ‘policy facing’ book of no more than 30,000 words published by Routledge. The book will have a large distribution, as it will be sent in print copy to all RSA members and in e-book format to all those who subscribe to any of the journals of the RSA. Applicants are advised to read the application support document carefully and to comply with rules of the scheme such as the inclusion of a named early career researcher in the team.

Application queries

The Policy Expo initiative is worth up to £15,000 (c.\$19,000; c. €16,800) to successful teams aiming to connect their work and wider communities to societal questions and policy needs. The RSA seeks to support 3 Policy Expos:

- 1. Infrastructure in local and regional development**
- 2. Austerity urbanism and inclusive growth**
- 3. Sustainable energy**

Research related queries should be addressed in the first instance to the RSA Chief Executive, Sally Hardy on sally.hardy@regionalstudies.org and policyexpo@regionalstudies.org

Administrative queries should be addressed to policyexpo@regionalstudies.org or by telephoning +44 (0)1273 698 017.

Please send your applications to policyexpo@regionalstudies.org

The submission deadline for detailed applications is **12th June 2019**.

To download the application form and handbook, please go to <http://www.regionalstudies.org/funding/page/policy-expo-grant-scheme>